Funds for minorities for Haj pilgrimage

1383. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria set up to fund the minorities for Haj pilgrimage;

(b) the preference being given to poor people under BPL categories in Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the preference being given to children especially not only for Haj pilgrimage but also for Ajmer and other pilgrimages within the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) The Government do not fund the minorities for Haj pilgrimage except to the extent the subsidy being provided for their air travel for the pilgrimage.

(b) The selection of the pilgrims is done on random basis on the pattern of 'Computerized Qurrah'. As such, no preference is being given to the poor people under BPL categories in Andhra Pradesh or any other State.

(c) No preference is being given to children for Haj Pilgrimage.

Strengthening of ties with US

1384. SHRI SABIR ALI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to further strengthen its ties with the United States of America; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) and (b) Yes. Government of India desires to strengthen and deepen relations with the United States of America in existing areas of bilateral cooperation such as defence and security, energy, space, education, economy and commerce, science and technology, health, people to people contracts among others, and to identify possible areas of collaboration in newer areas of cooperation to take bilateral ties to a higher level of engagement. It also seeks to intensify engagement with the USA on global issues of common concern such as climate change, disarmament, international terrorism and maritime security to strengthen Indo-US strategic partnership.

Steps to face Talibani terror

†1385. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps being taken to maintain the law and order situation in India in the wake of increasing Talibani terror first in Afghanistan and then in Pakistan;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the discussions held in this regard during the recent conference in Russia and the action plan formalised with the President of Pakistan; and

(c) the circumstances which necessitated the change in the decision that no discussion would be held with Pakistan until it takes appropriate action in the wake of 26/11 incident occurred in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Government will take all such steps as are necessary to safeguard the country's interests.

(b) and (c) Subsequent to the Prime Minister's Statement in Parliament on 9th June 2009 that it is in our vital interest to try again to make peace with Pakistan, Prime Minister met the President of Pakistan on the sidelines of the SCO-BRIC summit in Yekaterinburg on 16th June, 2009 and conveyed India's expectation that the Government of Pakistan will honour its commitments to take strong and effective action to prevent the use of Pakistani territory for terrorist attacks on India.

Ill treatment to PIOs in UK

†1386. SHRI PRABHAT JHA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that the people of Indian origin living in United Kingdom (U.K.) are being treated like culprits;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/being taken by Government to prevent the discriminatory behaviour with Indians living permanently in U.K. and other countries of the world?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Amendments to H-1B Visa procedure

1387. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of amendments made to the H-1B Visa procedure by US Government recently;

(b) whether it is a fact that the amendments would badly hit Indian IT professionals;

(c) whether it is also a fact that out of 65,000 probable Visas to US, only 45,000 people have applied so far;

(d) if so, whether any consultations with the US officials have been carried out not to insist on amendments; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.